




Speech By
Hon. Amanda Camm

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

Record of Proceedings, 10 December 2024

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Residential Care

 **Hon. AJ CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (Minister for Families, Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Child Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (10.01 am): All Queensland children deserve to be safe and supported and given the opportunity to reach their full potential. Sadly, this is not the case for many of the children in the residential care system. Queensland has more than 2,000 children living in residential care facilities across the state—a number that has more than tripled since 2015. Some 683 of those children are aged under 12—a number that has increased 381 per cent since 2015.

The cost of residential care is simply unsustainable. The state will likely spend more than \$1 billion on residential care this financial year, with the average cost per child per night of \$1,360. The current trajectory of residential care costings has left a budget black hole to the tune of \$500 million and Queensland Labor has been negligent in their fiscal responsibility and as the guardian of these children. Labor has been caught out lying to Queenslanders and our government has inherited a broken system.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I caution you on using unparliamentary language. You need to withdraw.

Ms CAMM: I withdraw. This government has inherited a broken system—a system that was without a plan to protect children and our communities. The previous government's road map for residential care was quite frankly on the road to nowhere. Their extreme underfunding for the sector, along with the sheer increases in children living in residential care—especially those under 12—is a disgrace. When I meet with departmental staff and hear about five-year-olds who have been in residential care for more than one year, those opposite should hang their heads in shame.

It has become clear that Labor did not care about Queenslanders' money, their safety or doing the right thing by the state's most vulnerable children. The children who currently call residential care home are the reason that I am standing here today—to be their minister and to support them in their future—committed to reforming the broken system that this government has inherited. We will provide them with better care and hope for the future.

The Crisafulli government is not daunted by the task ahead. Our \$383 million Safer Children, Safer Communities policy includes a plan to reform the residential care system. It includes critical support for early intervention.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I will stop you for a moment. Member for McConnel, I caution you.

Ms CAMM: It includes critical support for early intervention for our most vulnerable children and young people. Under the reforms, we will increase allowances for extracurricular activities and education support for children in out-of-home care which will support foster and kinship carers with cost-of-living pressures associated with raising children.

We will also pilot a new professional foster care program for children with complex needs and with disability who are currently placed in the residential care system. That will mean more children living in family-based care are not in single bedrooms all alone. The reforms will also deliver residential care facilities that are staffed appropriately with staff who are able to manage the complex needs and behaviours of children and young people who live there. We on this side of the House care about safety.

A new dual carer model will be developed with the sector and implemented, providing two rostered carers at residential care facilities 24 hours a day when required. Under the former government, one child in care this financial year has resulted in the highest cost of \$2.448 million. This is not acceptable. This is why we will also deliver Queensland's first secure care facility to provide safe care to children who are a danger to themselves and others. We are a government that will deliver safer children and a safer community.